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"Masters in this hall,  
Hear ye news today  
Brought over sea,  
And ever I you pray.  
Nowell! Nowell! Nowell! Nowell!  
Sing we clear!"

## The Christmas Ride

By Isabel Neill

"IF it would only snow," sighed Stephanie, all of the ardor of her eight years in her voice. "That would make it seem more like Christmas, wouldn't it?"

"Snow!" Janice's voice was stern. "Snow! It doesn't even rain in this place. We can't expect snow. Nothing but sand and sagebrush and empty hills. A great place, say I."

"It is a great place," Mrs. Wallace said, gently but convincingly. "It has brought me nearer to the baby Christ than any Christmas has done before. Stephanie, do you know that this country is very like Palestine? Those brown hills over there are much the same as those from which the shepherds saw the Star and were led to the baby Christ."

"Really, Mother?"

"Really. You can read about it in this book, if you like. Perhaps you could read it aloud to us."

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, Mother! Don't have that child stumbling along reading aloud, spelling out words. I can't bear it!"

"Very well."

There was a pained note in her mother's voice. Janice rose from the window, where she had been looking out on the desert stretches, broken here and there with fields and orchards that promised so much of hope for the years to come. She went to her mother, and dropped a careless arm around her neck.

"I'm a beast today, Mumsey," she admitted. "But I am lonely, some way. Lonely for the shops, the crowds, the holly wreaths, the music in the churches, the smell of evergreens—all the things that Christmas has meant to me. I think I'll go for a run on Bouncer. Maybe it'll shake some of the cobwebs out of my mind, and I'll come back feeling more civilized."

Janice caught up her sweater and red beret. She ran to the barn, where Bouncer, the shaggy, friendly pony Mr. Wallace had bought for his daughters, greeted her with a little nicker. She



slipped on his bridle and saddle, and led him out of doors. Bouncer, always amiable, didn't act so today. He tried to pull away when she went to mount him, and she had to rein him in sharply and speak to him.

"What's the matter, lazybones? Don't you want to go for a nice gallop? I should think you'd feel as fusty as I do, staying there in the barn for days with no one but old Sukey and a couple of sheep for companions. Come on, snap into it!"

But Bouncer didn't snap. He plodded along, head down, every line of him expressing his disapproval of this outing. Janice had never used whip or spurs, but today she was wishing, in the back of her mind, for some method to put a little life into Bouncer.

Her eyes left the line of the low hills and sought the sky. It was a strange sky today, a sort of brassy color instead of the brilliant blue to which Janice had become accustomed.

"If it were spring, I'd say we were in for a dust storm," she told herself. Then she headed Bouncer toward the river, where she hoped to find something green growing near the water with which to liven up the house for the holiday. Bouncer wouldn't hurry. He lagged along, and it took nearly an hour to reach the river. Janice tied him to an old gate leading into what had once been a great cattle ranch, and hurried down to the canyon. She hustled along over the rocks. Some oak leaves—good! They were browned a bit, but she had a plan for them. Acorns, too. Great luck. If she could only find—but here it was—some jack pine! Recklessly she tore off as much as she could carry, and tied it and the oak leaves together with the long black tie from her middie. Then she ran back to Bouncer. She noticed he was shivering a bit. The wind was cold!

She mounted, and headed the pony toward home. No need to spur Bouncer on now! He was off like a shot. Janice could not have held him in, had she tried. He ran as if he were trying to escape something.

It was only a few minutes until she knew what it was. Suddenly the wind started up from the north, screaming down the cut in the hills made by the river. It howled triumphantly. The dust rose, almost straight into the air. The wind caught it, and whirled it in circles, now wide, now narrow. It bit into Janice's face. Bouncer lowered his head, but sped along valiantly. The dust grew thicker. Something was mixed with it now—something hard and cold as bullets—snow!

Bouncer slowed down. He could do nothing else. Janice could see only a few feet before her. The dust was piled over the road now,

and there was nothing to mark her way. She must trust to Bouncer's instinct.

On and on they went. Janice's fingers grew numb. She thought of tossing away her greens, but something held them to her. She needed them for Stephanie and Mother. She began to pray, silently but imploringly.

"Help me get through, Lord! Help me!"

On and on they plowed, through the dust that was like darkness. Janice was so cold she felt she was freezing. At last Bouncer ran into something. A shed! Not at home, though. This must belong to one of the families of squatters, living along the river in the hope that the great power plant was to be built and to bring them, through the building, work and money.

Janice slid down to the ground, testing her cold feet gingerly. Not frozen! She flailed her arms to and fro, until circulation was started in them. Then she took off Bouncer's saddle, led him to the most protected corner, and went to the opening. Nothing but dust and snow, she decided. Perhaps she should wait here until it was over. No, there was a light—just a pinprick of light, visible when the wind died down for a minute. She ran toward it, and almost before she knew it, fell against a building. She felt around till she found the door, and pounded loudly. She could hear sounds within, but no one answered.

"Let me in!" she cried. Still no answer.

Janice pushed open the door and walked in. She stopped, and stared about her.

"Who is it?" said a weak voice from a corner. She made out a bed, and the form of a woman lying on it. There was another bed nearby, and three small children were lying there.



"She mounted and headed the pony toward home."

"It's Janice Wallace. I live at River-view ranch, but got caught in the storm. My pony led me here."

"God led you here to save us. I am ill, and the children are ill. I am afraid they are starving. You will help us."

It was a demand, not a question.

"We are cold. There is a lantern in the kitchen. Light it, and take it to the lean-to. You'll find wood there."

Janice hurried to do as she was bid. The lamp by the woman's bedside was flickering low, almost burned out. Soon Janice had the fire going, and a kettle of water on it, starting to heat. She filled the lamp and polished the dingy chimney. By the stove stood a rickety table, on which was a loaf of dry bread.

"I'll make you some toast and tea," she told the woman. "And the children—what can I fix for them?"

"There's some dried meat in the lean-to," the weak voice began, "and some vegetables."

"Good! I'll make a pot of soup."

The next hour or two were busy ones for Janice. She ran to and fro, cleaning, cooking, carrying. She washed small, hot faces, and brought cool drinks. She bathed the baby, and gave him to his mother's arms. She brushed the woman's hair, matted with her days in bed.

At last, a new light seemed to come into the kitchen.

"Why, the storm has stopped," she said. "I hadn't realized it before. I must go home now, my people will be frightened to death about me."

"Don't leave us," the sick eyes seemed to implore her. "Don't leave us."

"I'm coming back," she assured them. "Perhaps Mother'll come with me. I'll bring you some milk and eggs, and we'll make the loveliest custard—it will taste so good, you wait and see if it doesn't. But I must hustle along now."

She ran for Bouncer, and soon they were speeding back to River-view ranch.

Long before she reached it, she could see her mother and Stephanie standing out on the little porch, looking across the stretches of desert land. She and Bouncer were welcomed with kisses and cries of joy.

"Well, Stephanie, you got your snow," she laughed at her little sister. "How did you like it?"

"Sis, it was awful. I cried every minute. And so did Mums."

"Darling, where were you?" Mrs. Wallace broke in. "You must have found shelter somewhere."

"I did—and that's the story. In one of the squatter's shacks! one half-way between here and the little settlement—that one in a hollow, tucked away by itself?"

"I know it. And they were kind to you?"

"Kind to me? They couldn't help



it. Mother, there's a woman there with a small baby, and three other little children, all of them sick in bed with the "flu." The husband is in Seattle, trying to get enough money together to take them all over there. Was I welcome? Was I? You should have seen me rustling wood and making soup. I even polished up a baby, for the first time in my short career."

"Darling!"

"I did so. And Mums, I thought maybe you'd go back with me. We can hitch Bouncer to the buggy and hike over there. I want you to look them over. I thought maybe you had some medicine in your famous kit that would help out. I promised the kiddies a nice treat of custard, so of course I'll have to do it."

"Surely, Janice. I'll look up the medicine, and you and Stephanie go through the cupboard. A lucky thing I baked bread today. Take two big loaves, girls, some fruit, eggs and milk. We'll take over a chicken tomorrow."

As Mrs. Wallace, Janice and Stephanie were riding home that night, after spending several hours in the squatter's cabin,

they were all very silent.

"Mother they're not so very sick, are they?" Janice asked at last.

"No, my dear. I took their temperatures. The children will be up in a day or so, and the woman about as soon. It was because they didn't have care and food that they were so weak. A lucky thing you found them."

"Bouncer found them, the old smart boy. Mother, maybe we could have them over for Christmas? I have some pine and some oak, and I'm going to make some gorgeous wreaths. We could have chicken, and fix up some little things for the children."

"Janice, that would be lovely. I'm so glad you thought of it?"

"I'll give them some of my dollies and make them some bean bags," Stephanie contributed.

Janice looked up at the sky. It seemed very close tonight, and the great stars hung very bright and near.

"Perhaps you are right, Mother," she said at last. "No, I'm sure you are right. It must have been something like this where Christ was born."

other houses seem so bright and festive." Dr. John said: "I have an idea, Bill, and if it will work out, it will help me to solve one of my own problems. By this time they had entered the house and found the Mistress-of-the-house sitting before the fire in the living room, looking very sad and lonely. Dr. John said, "Good evening, Mary, I've come to ask a great favor of you." "What is it?" she asked. "It's quite a long story," he answered. "Your neighbor, Mrs. Hart, is very sick indeed and must go to the hospital tonight for an operation. She is very much distressed because it means that the children will miss their Christmas, and they are a family who have always made a great deal of the holiday. Now here is where you can help. Won't you? . . . I know it's a lot to ask, . . . but, Mary, won't you ask those children to spend Christmas with you, and give them a happy time, so that their brave little mother can go to the hospital with her mind at ease? The two men watched her anxiously, as she sat silently thinking. Then two bright spots of color glowed in her cheeks, her tear-filled eyes began to shine and she answered: "Yes, I'll do it! Have those little folks come over to supper. They can spend the night here and, after they have eaten, the older ones can help me trim a tree. William, send the chauffeur out to get the finest tree he can find. And have Bridget get out the decorations that used to belong to Son."

So it was that lights began to glow in almost every room of the Big White House, there was a hustle and bustle such as it had never known. Strange men came and went on mysterious errands, trucks stopped at the gate and all kinds of packages and bundles were brought in. People passing, paused in astonishment to see through the window a huge tree twinkling with lights, to see children moving to and fro, to hear mirth and laughter, and music.

After a while the children were tucked into bed, but the man and woman still worked away, making the tree and the room more and more beautiful. From a radio came the lovely strains of old familiar music:

"It came upon the midnight clear,

That glorious song of old,

From angels bending near the earth  
To touch their harps of gold":

The woman wiped away a tear from her eyes but her lips were smiling. And the Big White House . . . Oh . . . how bright and happy it looked! It was the happiest house on the street, for Christmas was in its heart. It was no longer lonesome.



## The House that was Lonesome

By Charlotte Newcomb Parker

ALL the houses on Winter Street were getting ready for Christmas. Windows were washed, clean, crisp curtains were put up and gay festoons and cut-outs made by patient, childish fingers, were being put in them. Some had electric candles in every window, and wreaths tied with big red bows decorated almost every door. They seemed to be talking and laughing together and saying: "See how gay we are! We are getting ready to celebrate the Christ Child's birthday."

The little brown cottage seemed to be one of the happiest of all. That was where six little Hart children lived. There was such a hustle and bustle and so many mysterious packages were smuggled in that the little brown cottage seemed to be fairly bursting with joy.

Only the big white house on the corner remained unchanged. It was the newest and finest of all the houses on the street and seemed to think itself better than its neighbors. It was surrounded by a high fence, kept to itself in a very haughty manner, and did not join in the talk and gossip of the other houses. Houses, you know, become very much like the people who live in them. The man of the house never mowed his own lawn as did the owner of the brown cottage. He had a gardener to do it for him. The lady of the house did not sweep her own front porch and call a cheery greeting to passers-by,—oh, no, she had a trim maid to do the work for her.

Everyone expected the big white house to do wonderful things at Christmas time.

It would surely have lights on all the trees in the yard, and lovely wreaths in all the windows. But strangely enough the house remained just the same, and no one, not even the mischievous little breeze who carried so much news from place to place, dared to ask any questions.

The six little Hart children wondered a great deal about the big house, for while Daddy Hart rode to work in a rickety old Ford, the man-next-door, as they called him, went off in a fine limousine with a chauffeur in uniform to drive it, so it could not be for lack of money.

At last the early darkness of Christmas Eve fell, and the houses along Winter Street were all decorated and sparkling with lights and seemed to call out gayly to all who passed by: "Merry Christmas! A Very Merry Christmas!"

But the Big White House was quiet. No jolly lights shone in its windows, no wreath hung on its door.

Strangely enough the little brown cottage was unusually quiet, too. Doctor Goodman came slowly down the walk and was about to step into his little car when the big car of the man-next-door drew up to the curb and he called, "Hello, John, wait a minute, will you; I want to talk to you!"

So the two, who evidently knew each other very well, went in together and the man-next-door said to the doctor, "John, I don't know what to do with Mary. She has never gotten over the death of our son and she does not want to celebrate Christmas in any way. See how dark and gloomy our house looks, while all the



# Santa's Merger

## A Play in One Act

By Ben Scot Campbell

CHARACTERS: Santa Claus; two Dwarfs, Danny and Davy; a boy, Billy; two Girls, Mary and Alice.

SCENE: Outside Santa's house at the North Pole. Part of house can be seen at left, with snow-sprinkled pine trees in background at center and right. Davy and Danny Dwarf are sitting before house as two Girls and Boy enter, right, and look at the scene. Davy nudges Danny Dwarf and both look at intruders.

DAVY DWARF: Hello! Who are you?

*(The children hesitate, now timid.)*

DANNY DWARF: And what are you doing here?

MARY GIRL: We are from the world below, and have come to see Santa Claus.

DAVY DWARF: Children of the world. Oh yes.

DANNY DWARF: What do you want to see Santa about?

ALICE GIRL: We want to help Santa!

BILLY BOY: Yes, we came up in our airplane to see if we can help Santa take his Christmas presents down to the children of the world. He has so many to carry, you know.

DAVY DWARF: Well, you are too late!

DANNY DWARF: You should have come last year!

CHILDREN *(together)*: What do you mean?

DAVY DWARF: Santa has gone out of business!

CHILDREN *(together)*: What!

DANNY DWARF: At least he said this morning he had decided to accept their offer.

MARY GIRL: Whose offer?

DAVY DWARF: The Fullworth Five-and-Ten Co. He is going to sell out to the 5-and-10.

CHILDREN *(together)*: It can't be possible!

DAVY DWARF: Why not? Everybody is going into this merger business nowadays.

ALICE GIRL: I don't believe I understand about this merger business.

BILLY BOY: Aw, you're just a woman. It takes us men to understand such things.

MARY GIRL: All right, you tell us what it means.

BILLY BOY: Merger? Well—er—it's like this. Supposing you *(MARY G.)* are a coat company—you make coats. And supposing you *(ALICE G.)* are a vest company—you make vests. And supposing I am a pants company—I make pants. Well, we go into a football huddle, and when we come out of it we are just *one* company, and we make *suits*. That's a merger.



"Bright the star shines afar,  
Guiding travelers on their way."

ALICE GIRL: Oh, I see!

MARY GIRL: But I'm sure that Santa Claus would never merge with the 5-and-10.

DAVY DWARF: Oh, he'll merge all right.

BILLY BOY: Says you?

DAVY DWARF: Says me!

MARY GIRL: Oh, here comes Santa himself!

ALICE GIRL: Goody! Now we can ask *him* about it.

*(Santa comes from his house toward center, acting very stiff and lame and old.)*

SANTA: Hello there. I see we have company. *(He sits on a snow-covered stump in center.)* I'm not very spry. Come and shake hands with me. *(Children go to him and shake hands.)*

GIRLS *(together)*: Is it true, Santa?

SANTA: Is what true?

BILLY BOY: Is it true that you are going to merge with the Fullworth 5-and-10, and go out of business?

SANTA *(sighs)*: Yes, I'm afraid so.

CHILDREN *(disappointed)*: O-oh!

DWARFS *(together)*: No more Christmas presents for you.

ALICE GIRL: Not any more Christmas presents, Santa?

MARY GIRL: No boys and girls in the whole world will get any more Christmas presents?

SANTA: Well, I wouldn't say that exactly. I presume the 5-and-10 company will put out a *few* presents each year.

BILLY BOY *(scoffing)*: Yes, old cut-rate ones! Who wants *them*, I'd like to know?

SANTA: I'm sorry, but I guess there's no help for it.

MARY GIRL: But why are you going out of business, Santa?

ALICE GIRL: Yes, why are you going out of business, Santa?

SANTA: Well, the 5-and-10 has been trying to buy me out for years. They

just made my life miserable. I'm getting along, too, you know—over 1,900 years old, now. And when my rheumatiz got so bad this year I decided I didn't have the strength to keep on. There's no use of an old man like me trying to fight these big chain stores, anyway.

MARY GIRL: Oh, Santa,—think of the hundreds—

ALICE GIRL: and thousands—

BILLY BOY: and millions—

MARY GIRL: —of boys and girls all over the world who are expecting to see you this Christmas.

BILLY BOY: They'll be awfully disappointed, Santa.

DAVY DWARF: They *will* be disappointed, won't they, Danny?

DANNY DWARF: Yes, Davy, they'll be disappointed all right.

ALICE GIRL: And my mamma and I were going to put some very nice whipped-cream cake and hot chocolate in our fireplace for you on this Christmas Eve, Santa.

SANTA *(brightens up and rubs his hands together)*: Well, that sounds pretty good. *(Then he places his hands down on his knees and sighs.)* But no. I couldn't make it. My poor old reindeer are all worn out.

BILLY BOY: But you can use our airplane to carry the presents in!

SANTA: And I'm tired of making Christmas-tree speeches. . . . And that rheumatiz of mine! Why, my joints are so old and rusty that every one of them squeaks like the mischief. Oh, I'm just *full* of static!

DAVY DWARF: I have some Joy-oil up in my room that I know would help you.

DANNY DWARF: And I have some Good-cheer ointment. Just wait a jiffy while we get them. *(The dwarfs enter the house.)*



BILLY BOY: Oh, come on, Santa! You're good for a couple of thousand years more. Show the old fight, Santa, show the old fight!

SANTA (*gets up slowly and limps a few steps*): I don't know. I'm afraid it's no use. (*He returns to his stump.*)

MARY GIRL: Oh, I have an idea. Come on! (*She beckons Billy and Alice into a huddle with her, at right. . . . The dwarfs return.*)

SANTA: What's this?

BILLY BOY: We're just going into a huddle. Wait a minute. (*Santa and Dwarfs look at each other, puzzled. . . . Children then separate and take places as before.*)

ALICE GIRL: Santa Claus, we want you to merge with us!

SANTA: What!!!

BILLY BOY: Yes. Forget this 5-and-10 business and merge with us.

SANTA: Well, what have you to offer?

MARY GIRL: We represent the Spirit of Youth—

ALICE GIRL: —the Spirit of Joy—

BILLY BOY: —the Spirit of Giving—

MARY GIRL: And if you will merge with us, we'll make you young again, so that you can go on being Santa Claus to the children of the world forever and ever.

SANTA ( *rubs his chin thoughtfully; then—*)

All right, this *may* be worth a try; What can you do to make me spry? (*The children line up, down stage, and exercise with arms in time to their words.*)

CHILDREN (*together*):

1—2—3—4—look at us!

Don't you make an awful fuss

'Cause you think you're growing old,

We will make you young and bold.

March around and dance a bit—

Exercise will make you fit.

(*They circle round with last two lines, while Santa tries to keep up with them. At end the children look at Santa and laugh.*)

DAVY DWARF (*approaching Santa*): Here, Santa, this Joy-oil will help fix up your rusty joints.

DANNY DWARF: And this Goodcheer ointment will do wonders.

(*They pantomime rubbing oil and ointment on Santa.*)

DAVY DWARF: We must put some on his face, too, Danny, so he can smile as he used to. (*They rub Santa's cheeks. . . . Santa then smiles cheerily and seems more active as he tries out his joints.*)

SANTA: I do believe it makes a difference. What comes next?

MARY GIRL: Why, a little song and dance, of course.

ALICE GIRL: Are you ready?

BILLY BOY: Come on!

(*Children and Dwarfs join hands, down stage, and take dance steps as they sing to the tune of "Jingle Bells."*)



### The Christmas Flower

By GENEVRA A. COWAN

Hail to Queen Poinsettia!

In a land of ice and snow  
She brings Christmas greetings  
From our neighbor, Mexico.

Brought back from that tropic clime  
Where the "Fire Plants" grow,  
By a Mister Joel Poinsett  
One hundred years ago.

In the Southland it grows tall,  
Eleven feet or so,  
This bright "Painted Leaf," 'tis called,  
Down in Mexico.

Now we call it Christmas flower;  
Brilliant red and green  
Are the cheery colors  
That proclaim it Christmas Queen.

ALL:

Why should Santa merge his business all away

When we are here to urge him to be young and gay?

We'll show him how it's done, then

he will want to stay

And be our own dear Santa Claus forever and a day.

(*Santa joins them at center*),  
Santa Claus, Santa Claus, dance with us and sing;

Hop up on your nimble toes and make your dear voice ring.

Santa Claus, Santa Claus, you are the children's friend,

And if you'll only stay with us, we'll love you to the end.

(*They stop and all laugh merrily*)

MARY GIRL: Now, Santa, how do you feel?

ALICE GIRL: Yes, Santa, how do you feel?

BILLY BOY: Are you ready for a real Christmas again?

SANTA (*capers*): You just bet I am. I'm rarin' to go!

MARY GIRL: Do you really and truly mean it?

SANTA: Of course I do. And now that you've brought back my youth and courage, I don't see how I ever let that 5-and-10 company talk me into selling out. But you can tell all the boys and girls down in the world that they can depend on my being their Santa Claus for time everlasting! And I'm going to call Fullworth's on the phone right now and tell them.

ALICE GIRL: Goody, goody—

BILLY BOY: —that is great!

MARY GIRL: Santa, do not hesitate!

(*Santa enters house. Soon his voice is heard.*)

SANTA:

Dial 1—2—3—and then—

Hello, is this the 5-and-10? . . .

MARY GIRL: There seems to be a little pause.

SANTA:

Hello! Yes, this is Santa Claus.

I want to say I've changed my mind;

I've thought things over and I find

I cannot merge with your store.

I'm going to keep on as before,

Making lots of games and toys,

And taking them to girls and boys.

That's final, sir, goodbye, goodbye.

ALICE GIRL: I'm so happy I could cry!  
(*Santa comes from his house.*)

SANTA: There, I'm glad to say that is settled.

BILLY BOY: And now come with us and we'll show you our airplane. It's big enough to carry you and all your presents down to the world.

SANTA: That's fine, children! And let's hurry; we must make up for lost time, you know.

(*They start out, right, as curtain begins to close. All are in step and they sing happily.*)

ALL:

Santa Claus, Santa Claus, you are the children's friend;

And if you'll only stay with us, we'll love you to the end.

(CURTAIN)

### An Old-Fashioned Christmas

By V. H. ROSS

Snow fell thick and fast today,

In the streets of old Back Bay.

This is Christmas eve and lo!

Candles from the windows glow.

Through the night air sweet and clear,  
Chime of Christmas bells we hear.

Tidings of a new-born King,

Strolling minstrels chant and sing.

### A Christmas Token

By FRANCES HALL

I'll twine you wreaths of merry thought  
That once you gave to me—

The scarlet berries there inwrought

Your kindly deeds shall be—

And hang them in my heart's own shrine  
Where friendship's brightest candles shine.



## The Birds' Christmas Tree

By Howard T. Knapp

SO much snow had fallen during the night that the White Forest was buried under a soft, fleecy blanket nearly a foot thick, and in places great drifts were piled up as high as your head. But that did not bother Billy Boy. No sir, not a bit, for he was bundled up as snug as a bug in a rug, and as he trudged through the big woods, he whistled as merrily as the little chap who lived on Smiling Island, where the Happy Fairies dwell.

"Gee, but I'm hungry," said Billy, and just then he spied a hickory nut in the snow at the foot of an old stump. But when he picked it up, he found a clean little hole had been cut in the shell and the kernel taken out.

"Now who could have done that?" said Billy to himself, "and where did this nut come from anyway, I should like to know."

Then he saw there was a small hole in the side of the old stump, and, thrusting in his hand, what do you suppose he found? Well you would never guess, so I may as well tell you. There was about a quart of nuts inside that stump, but when Billy had finished filling his pockets, there was not a nut left.

"Now I can have a feast," chuckled Billy, and he started for home, but before he had gone very far he heard the most awful racket in the branches of a big oak, and there sat Frisky, the Red Squirrel, chattering and scolding away at a great rate. There was no use talking, Frisky was just about the maddest little fellow in all the White Forest, and generally he is the best-natured old rascal in the world. But now he was using such terrible language that Busybody, the Bluejay, who had come rushing up to find out what was the matter, flew away in disgust, and Busybody, you know, scolds more than all the other Little People who dwell in the White Forest.

"What under the sun is the matter?" cried Billy Boy.

"Frisky has been robbed," replied Uncle Ben who had been taking a walk in the woods and just at that minute caught up with Billy.

"Robbed? Why who could have robbed him?" exclaimed Billy in surprise.

"I'm sure I don't know," replied Uncle Ben, "but someone broke into his house back there in that old stump and stole his winter's supply of nuts. Naturally he's pretty mad about it, for now he will have to go hungry for a while."

"Why I—I—" stammered Billy, and then he stopped, for he remembered his pockets were full of nuts, and he suddenly realized that

it was he who had robbed Frisky. "I didn't know those nuts belonged to Frisky, honest I didn't," he protested, two big tears rolling down his cheeks.

"Now Billy Boy, there's nothing to cry about," comforted Uncle Ben. "We can put the nuts back in Frisky's snug little den and everything will be all right again, but next time remember that it is mighty hard for the Little People to get enough to eat during the winter when the ground is covered with snow and everything is frozen up. Frisky makes out fairly well, for in the fall he stores up enough nuts to last him through the long winter, but it is different with the birds, for there are no insects or berries for them to eat."

"Once in a while I scatter bread crumbs in our yard," said Billy, "and then the birds have a regular feast."

"That's a mighty good idea, but what do you suppose the birds do the rest of the time?"

"I don't know," answered Billy. "I never thought of that."

"Well, they often go to roost hungry. Now how would you like it if you had to go to bed without your supper?"

"I wouldn't like at all," replied Billy.

"Neither do the birds," replied Uncle Ben. "Now I have a bright idea. What do you say if we trim a Christmas Tree for our feathered friends?"

"A Christmas Tree?"

"Yes sir, a Christmas Tree. Only in-

stead of trimming with bright balls and tinsel, we will trim the branches with crusts of bread, little pieces of suet and an apple or two, and on the snow under the tree we'll scatter a handful of grain. What do you say?"

"Why that will be heaps of fun," agreed Billy. "And if you'll wait for me right here I'll run home and ask Mother for the things."

So Billy scampered home as fast as his chubby little legs would carry him, and before long he was back again with a big bundle of good things for the Little People. Uncle Ben had picked out a small spruce tree that grew in a sheltered spot, and almost before you could say Jack Robinson they had the branches trimmed with big crusts of bread and chunks of beef fat.

Busybody, the Bluejay, had been watching them from the branches of a nearby oak, and when Billy and Uncle Ben sat down on a log some distance away to rest, he flew down to see what had been going on. And when he found the tree loaded with goodies, didn't he have a feast! Then when he had eaten until he couldn't hold another crumb, he flew off through the woods, spreading the news to all the Little People. The birds came by twos and threes, and before Billy and Uncle Ben started for home a whole flock of hungry but happy feathered songsters were gathered about the Christmas Tree, enjoying the presents tied to its branches.

"I wish we had thought of this scheme sooner," said Billy. "But now that I know how much the birds enjoy their Christmas Tree, I'll keep the branches filled with presents every day."

Now why don't YOU try it, too?

### Snow

By ELIZABETH C. WHERRY

Over the sand-pile,  
Snow sugar frosting,  
Over the play-house,  
Spun sugar paint,  
Over the garden  
Marshmallow candy,  
Over the rosebush  
Robes of a saint.

Over the lilacs  
Trimnings of seafoam,  
Over the pine-trees  
A soap-bubble dream,  
Over the grasses  
Blankets of ermine,  
Over the fence-posts  
Crowns of whipped-cream.

"Christmas trees a-glitter,  
Christmas stars a-shine,  
Everyone is happy  
If his heart's like mine."







## Children of Oberammergau

By Mary Louise Stetson



As the Oberammergau mother watches her children growing up around her in the peasant home, how often she must say to herself, "I wonder if, by-and-by, this little Annie will be chosen to take the part of Mary in the Passion Play. I wonder if, by-and-by, this little Alois will be chosen to take the part of Christ, himself."

Every tenth year some Oberammergau mothers find such dreams coming true. Why may her turn not come some time? Those who so beautifully represent Christ and those with whom he lived on the earth are all peasant folk who live and work for their daily bread in the quaint little village nestled among the hills of Bavaria, Germany.

The church of Oberammergau with its odd tower looms high above the village houses. It seems right that it should, for worship in the church holds an important place in the doings of the Oberammergau peasants.

Through the village flows the Ammer River from which the village takes its name, and on the banks of this river, Oberammergau children like to play. If an Oberammergau girl should walk down a city street of America, she would scarcely be noticed among the American people. But if an Oberammergau boy should walk down a city street of America, everyone would turn to look at him. "Why does that child not go to the barber's and have his hair cut?" This is the question that everyone would be asking.

Quite likely a boy of Oberammergau has no fondness for the feeling of long hair about his neck and over his eyes in the summertime. Nevertheless, because he is eager to take part in the great re-

ligious drama of his village, he lets his hair grow long the year of the Passion Play. He must look like a boy of Bible times and boys of Bible times wore long hair.

The children of Oberammergau, like their parents, are very reverent when they take part in the Passion Play. They appear in some of the mob scenes and in the tableaux, more beautiful even than the drama itself. It is hard to understand how children who laugh and play and are so active at other times can keep so quiet in the tableaux for the long period before the curtain falls. Perhaps they are anxious to do their part in the keeping of that promise made to God by the peasants who lived in Oberammergau almost three hundred years ago.

## Santa Claus in Other Lands

By Aline Ballard

**W**HO is he, this fat, red-cheeked, jolly old fellow who brings gifts at Christmas time? He stands on the street corners; he lingers in the toy departments of the stores; he visits the Christmas tree at the church.

You call him Santa Claus. And, if you hang your stockings at the chimney place on Christmas Eve, you are sure to find them bulging with packages when you come downstairs the next morning.

More than a thousand years ago, there lived in a far-away land called Lycia, a man named Nicholas. Because he was a very good man, he was known as a saint. Now, Saint Nicholas especially loved children and was always giving them little presents. He had many older friends, too. Among them was a nobleman, poor and in need but too proud to beg. St. Nicholas wished very much to help his friend. And one night as he was passing the house he saw the old man

asleep in the chimney corner. What did St. Nicholas do but climb stealthily to the roof, where he dropped a piece of gold down the chimney. The money fell, by chance, into a stocking hung there to dry.

When good old St. Nicholas died, people remembered how he had given presents to the children and put gold into the nobleman's stocking, and they said, "St. Nicholas is the spirit of giving."

When the little Dutch children tried to say St. Nicholas, it sounded like Sinterklaas; and that is what they have nicknamed him. And, of course, that is where the word Santa Claus comes from.

At first they thought that he was a tall figure dressed in dark robes like a bishop. Later they changed him into a jolly fat Dutchman with short breeches. They believe that he rides over the housetops in a sleigh drawn by reindeer, which he bought in Lapland. And so, they place their shoes by the chimney. Next morning, the good children find presents but the naughty ones receive only a switch.

In Russia, the boys and girls fill their shoes with oats for the horses of St. Nicholas. In the morning the oats are gone and the shoes brimming over with packages.

French children call their Santa, "Pere Noel," or Father Christmas. They also set out their shoes, but they receive only two or three presents.

The children of Porto Rico believe that Santa Claus flies through the air like a bird. There it is too hot to wear shoes or stockings and Santa Claus looks, instead, for little boxes that the children have placed in the courtyards. As he flies by, he drops gifts into the boxes. He is unusually generous in this country, for he comes every night during the entire Christmas week.

In Denmark at Christmas time, a good fairy called "Julnissie," brings gifts to each house, where the Mother has placed a bowl of milk and rice in the attic.

Italy has the queerest Santa Claus of all. Here, an ugly old witch comes riding through the night on a broomstick. And instead of having their presents on Christmas eve, the Italian children have to wait until Epiphany, twelve days later. They hang up their stockings on the mantel and wait for this old witch, whose name is Befana. Although no one has ever seen her, they are all very much afraid of her. Nevertheless, she behaves much as any ordinary Santa Claus. The good children find presents, while the bad get nothing but a stocking full of ashes.

English and American children, who live in Italy, say that Befana is Santa's wife, who comes because Santa cannot stand the hot climate.

If this is true, are you not glad that Christmas in the United States is cold and snowy, so that Santa Claus here can come all dressed up in a furry red suit and white whiskers?



# THE BEACON CLUB

## The Editor's Post Box

Writing a letter for this corner makes you a member of the Club. Address, The Beacon Club, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass.

Dear B. C. Members:

The nice letters which we are receiving from children all over the country, telling us of their interest in *The Beacon* and in our Club, make us very happy. We have correspondents for the fourteen children in India whose names were sent to us; in fact, we have several correspondents for most of these boys and girls. Our thanks to those who have written and a Very Merry Christmas to all our readers, from

THE EDITOR.

54 HARVEST ST.,  
DORCHESTER, MASS.

Dear Editor: I would like to become a member of your Club. I am a reader of *The Beacon* and I enjoy the stories, letters, and puzzles very much.

## Tommy's Soliloquy on Christmas Wrappings

By MARIE DODGE JONES

My father says he cannot see  
Why Christmas packages should be  
All wrapped and tied with ribbons red,  
Or bound around with tinsel thread.

My mother works for days and days,  
And wraps up things the nicest ways;  
She says, no matter what's inside,  
She wants the outside glorified.

My father grunts and turns away,  
As if there's nothing more to say,  
But I can see he won't agree,  
Though presently he winks at me,

And says to mother, with a frown,  
"My dear, I wish you would sit down  
And rest a while, or read a book.  
Who cares how those old parcels look?"

On Christmas Eve we light the tree,  
And sit around it quietly,  
But father wears a look of gloom,  
And sends my mother from the room.

He asks us children where to find  
Some wrappings of the Christmas kind;  
And while we children guard the door,  
He takes some wrappings from a drawer.

On Christmas morning, first I see,  
The brightest package on the tree,  
Is one for mother, wrapped that night.  
You know my father does things right!

OUR PURPOSE: Helpfulness.

OUR MOTTO: Let your light shine.

OUR BADGE: The Beacon Club Button.

The church I attend is the First Parish Church of Dorchester. Our minister is Rev. Adelbert L. Hudson.

I am thirteen years old and am in the first year of high school. Would some girl of my age please correspond with me?

Yours truly,

ARLINE FRENCH.

2012 CORNWALL ST.,  
VANCOUVER, B. C.

Dear Editor: I belong to the First Unitarian Church in Vancouver. I like reading *The Beacon* and would like to join the Beacon Club. I am eleven years old.

Yours truly,

MARY MURPHY.



## Christmas Smells

By HARVEY PEAKE

Oh, the lovely smells of Christmas!  
Different from the rest,  
Though each place contributes something;  
Kitchen smells are best.

There's the smell of pine and cedar,  
Burning candle wax,  
Citron, raisins, orange peel and  
Highly spiced knickknacks.

Mince-meat pies and fruity pudding,  
Pop-corn, cake and tart,  
Oh, how sad it will be when the  
Christmas smells depart!

## Puzzlers

### Enigma

I am composed of 25 letters and am the heart of the Christmas message.

My 4, 3, 1, 8 is a point of land.

My 17, 14, 15, 16 is a fuel.

My 17, 18, 19, 20, 6, 17 is a tree.

My 23, 9, 25, 24 is part of a horse.

My 21, 22, 6, 11, 12 is much used by man and beast.

My 6, 7, 4, 8 is one time only.

My 13, 10, 3, 4, 2 is charm of manner.

My 1, 5, 7 is what we write with.

J. W.

### Hourglass

Seven letters in first and last words.

Centrals read downward spell the name of a Massachusetts city.

The story of the world's progress.

To express gratitude.

A weapon.

A letter.

Consumed

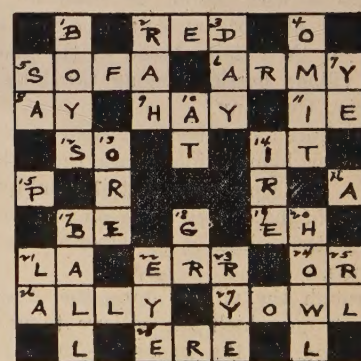
At a distance but not out of sight.

Not older.

E. F. B.

## Answer to Puzzle in No. 10

A Harvard Cross-Word Puzzle.—



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